1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

and broke its neck. They all stood around looking at it. Then one of my brothers spoke up for my nephew, 'Well!' he said to the husband, 'We intended to do right by you. Now there is nothing left but to offer to let you whip him.' 684 627x

"The boy took off his shirt to get ready.

"Then a man spoke up for the other side, and said, 'We see that your intentions are good. He's a young and fine man; we won't hurt him if he promises to be good in the future.

"The boy was glad to promise, and the case was settled right there."

Could anything bring out more strongly (a) the social approval behind the justified plaintiff; (b) the extent to which the aggrieved might want vindication rather than reward—and was under *pressure* to be magnanimous?

In a case of wife-stealing it was not incumbent upon the husband to seek damages. It was sufficient if he demanded the return of his wife, making the demand good. It also served if he slaughtered his wife for her act of desertion. Thus, in two of the twenty-two specific cases of wife-stealing of which we have record, the wife was slain outright by the husband without negotiation for her return or for damages. In slightly less than half of these cases the husband negotiated for the return of his wife and got her. In most of these instances no damages were paid. In an equal proportion of the absconding cases, the husband sued for damages, received a satisfactory settlement, and released his claim on his wife, thus permitting (or acknowledging) her change of marital status.

The unfaithful wife was in any event subject to severe chastisement, unless her husband feared her lover or absconder. Unless her lover's protection was adequate, her husband almost certainly whipped her, gashed the soles of her feet, or more commonly, cut off her nose. Though thus disfigured for life, there was no marked social stigma in noselessness. Pity, rather, was felt for the unfortunate woman, for the Comanches placed a high value on good looks. [832]

INTERMEDIARIES AND THE CHAMPION-AT-LAW

Women who were deserting their husbands rather consistently chose brave men as partners in absconding. Or, if the absconder was doubtful as to his own fighting ability, he placed himself and his runaway woman under the temporary protection of a war party leader. It is also said (no cases) that a would-be absconder sometimes induced a war party leader to steal the desired woman, then to release her for the lover after the settlement had been made. Consequently, the husband was more frequently than not the weaker party in the bargain situation. He was impelled to 627x 684

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

The Comanches

584 A youngster whose heart was too faint to approach a girl on his own account sought out an old and distantly related woman and put his plight to her. It was up to her secretly to arrange a tryst with the girl of his heart. Thomas Gladwin reports that this service was supplied by a boy's sister, but our informants specifically denied this possibility.[13] "It would make people too suspicious." Furthermore, it seems quite unlikely that a sister would be sent on a mission with sexual implications.

It was after they had got over the first pangs of adolescence that vain young men took to the *tuiβitsi* pattern of showing off. It was a show-off for the girls collectively, however, for no Comanche boy could decently reveal a public display of interest in one girl.

It was good tactics for a young man who had fallen in love with a maiden to seek the acquaintance and to cultivate the friendship of her brother, or some other near relative, or the person who controlled her marriage. If the suitor and the girl's brother were together on the warpath, the suitor might give the brother arrows or a horse and in various ways try to make things easy for him, addressing him as *nɜmɨsɨ̃ɨ*, "our children's uncle," i.e., the brother of my offspring's mother—a subtle hint of things he hoped to come.[14] This could lead the brother to speak a favorable word at home in behalf of his friend—of his bravery, his strength, his ability as a hunter or raider, and other commendable qualities. He might even extend an invitation to the friend to come to his family's lodge. The suitor was also likely to offer the girl gifts, including horses, in an effort to win her favor.

583 When a suitor had decided that he wanted a certain girl for a wife, he made a present to the girl's brother, her father, or her guardian. The most acceptable gift was a horse. In a few cases a boy was known to work (hunt or raid) for the family of the girl he wanted for a wife for as much as one, two, or three years.[15] In any event, sons-in-law were obligated to provide meat for their wives' parents. There was also love medicine known to certain practitioners who could be induced to charm the girl on behalf of a petitioner so that she could not resist his suit. [832]

[13] Thomas Gladwin, "Comanche Kin Behavior," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. L (1948), 73–94.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Informant: Kills Something; see also Smithwick, *op. cit.*, 183.

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6

and actually in many, a girl had no formal voice in the choice of her husband. Her brothers gave her away in exchange for a consideration. The takers were usually older and established warriors and hunters who had the goods. In the Comanche ideal such arrangements made for the best marriages. But they were marriages in which the woman was at the mercy of her husband. Working against the stability of such marriages was a strong current of romantic idealism among the young. The ambition of the adolescent girl was to be a *naiβi*,[5] i.e., a beautiful maiden with lustrous, black hair hanging in long braids, and dressed in a fine fringed buckskin dress. The young bucks for their part strove to attract the attention of the girls by playing the role of *tuiβttsi*: "a handsome young man who looks good on a horse." Wife-absconding was really an escape in which a frustrated wife sought a more romantic match with a daring warrior.

Comanche elopements were invariably linked to a war party. The man in the case would be going on a raid with his friends, and he would make an assignation with the woman to go along. It was a way provided by custom to violate the marriage rights of the rightful husband as defined by custom and sustained by law! A nice example of internal inconsistency in the ways of a culture.

When a woman and her lover took off with a war party, two courses were open to the jilted husband. He could mount in hot pursuit in the hope that he could overtake them before they reached enemy territory. Or he could bide his time until they returned from the raid. In enemy country he could not press his suit; here all Comanches had to stand shoulder to shoulder. Aside from this, he could institute his action wherever he might be able to confront his tortfeasor. He might take along some compatriots—brothers, real or putative—to strengthen his courage and his arm, if need be. A real man, however, went alone. It was not necessary for him to gather witnesses, for a Comanche legal action was in no sense a trial. Questions of evidence rarely, if ever, entered. The wife-stealer, or even the adulterer, had no desire to conceal his deed; his aim was to flaunt his prestige in the face of the challenged husband.

If he followed the dictates of decorum, he politely addressed the defendant as "brother." The defendant replied in kind. Did not Comanche brothers share their wives? Syllogistically the reasoning runs:

> Men who share a wife are brothers.
> This man has assumed a share in my wife.
> Therefore, he is my brother.
> (But he is going to pay for the privilege!)

The immediate goal of the prosecuting husband was to get *nanewɔkɔ*, restitutive damages. As an opening gambit he placed his demands high,

[5] Phonetic symbols are used as in the International Phonetics System.